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## Revelation

### Chapter 14 - Revealing the Consequence of Choice Accentuates Position (vs. 1-5)

**Revelation 14:1-5:** Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to

the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

This is such a powerful passage. Imagine standing with the Lamb. If you put it in the context, the time is so crucial to understand just how powerful this passage is. Because we find ourselves in the midst of the Great Tribulation, the midst of it. I mean, according to Chapter 11 in Revelation, there had been two witnesses that had come. They had been proclaiming in the city of Jerusalem the power of God, even having the ability to close up the heavens and to cause great famine in the lands; displaying great power and proclaiming God. It couldn't have been more clear. But when all was said and done, the world hated them, and the beast comes up and devours them. They lie dead on the street, and you would think the world would mourn, but instead of mourning, they're celebrating. So, as Revelation 11 begins to unfold, we see the celebration of the world as they celebrate the death of these prophets who had been proclaiming to them nothing but

the truth and the glory of God; the wonderful message of whosoever believes can be saved and [they're] now dead. After 3 days, they raise up and they ascend into the heavens. That alone would tell me, maybe I did the wrong thing. At that moment, according to Revelation 11, the whole earth begins to move in the region of Jerusalem, and 7,000 immediately die. The passage then goes into the realm of the declaration in the heavens that victory is coming. But you look now to the earth, and it doesn't look that way. Because at this juncture, all hell begins to break loose.

Chapter 12 of Revelation begins to describe this battle that we find ourselves in as a personal thing between God and the evil one. And we see this personal picture that is given to us in Chapter 12 of this woman that is beloved and greatly loved and given so many wonderful things. And of course, obviously, as the description goes on, we understand this woman to be Israel. And as she'd been given so many things, we see the love of God towards her. We see that the purpose and one of the great designs of this love is to produce a child that will save the world. And

so, a child is born. But there is an evil force, and the picture gives us this dragon that comes out to devour this child, even this woman, while in childbirth. And God rescues the child and takes Him home. It then begins to reveal the hatred of the dragon for the woman and for anything connected to God. And so, the bitterness and the anger begins to attack. And God rescues and takes them into a hiding place. And Chapter 12 ends. The purpose of Chapter 12 is to once again reveal that this is a personal battle. This is not just about the masses of humanity. It's about a relationship and God's love for His Son, God's love for His people.

You come into Chapter 13 and we're now in the thick of things. They've rejected the prophets, they've rejected everything that was good the world has, and now they are embracing the beast. They are the beast. And as the beast comes out of many waters, it begins to take control. And without getting into the specifics of it, if you see the general picture, you see the false prophet coming in and displaying false signs. Well, there were great signs that were given by the true prophets, but they didn't believe.

So, it's not specifically the signs that they're following. It is the evil that these signs represent, just like when Christ came and He showed so many signs. But people were not attracted to Him because the signs that He was demonstrating were not the signs that they were looking for. So, as you come into Chapter 13, you see the beast and just how horrific the control of this beast is. He ultimately takes such control that he gets people on their knees. And if you won't get on your knees, you won't be able to buy or sell without his mark. And so, the oppression and the control begin to come into play. I mean, you walk away from the end of Chapter 13, and you say, "Things couldn't get any worse." Everybody has to have this mark, and you can't survive. I mean, the world is telling you, "You can't survive. If you can't buy or sell, you can't survive without me." And man begins to believe it.

The purpose of the tribulation is to separate. Light and darkness has to separate. You have little tribulation and you have little clarity. You don't know who's on what side. There's a lot of gray. There's a lot of shadows. There's a

lot of confusion and obscurity in those shadows. What is truth? Well, I mean, people can say that they believe in God when everything's going okay and when it's beneficial, and when there's no price to pay. But when the difficulty comes in and there has to be a decision made as far as, "Will I trust God or will I trust man? Will I believe that God alone saves or will I turn to the world?" Well, the division is set. The choice is clear. And that's what tribulation does. The darkest hour literally brings us to a place which I would call all or nothing. That's the purpose of the darkest hour. Are you wholly dependent on God or are you wholly dependent on man? And whether or not you want to make the decision or not, you're going to have to. You have to. It's one of the wonders, and to me, one of the great joys of us even seeing the times change in our lifetime. Because what we're seeing is the forcing of decisions. And I can see people going, "I don't want to make one." And the world's saying, "You're going to have to make one." You're going to have to make one. And darkness is moving in. The question is, will you be light? Because light has no

fellowship with darkness. None. And so, the all or nothing begins to settle in.

Well, that's really what Chapter 14 is about. Because Chapter 14 is about those decisions and about the clarity of those decisions and the separation of the two. So, at the beginning of Chapter 14, you have the holy ones, the ones that are standing with the Lamb. And the bottom line in this is that there's only one thing protecting them. It's not the Lamb plus something. It's not money. It's not... you can go down the list; it's not the medical field. There's nothing there to protect them except what? The Lamb. That's it. And there's only one thing that the world is now going to. And what is it? The beast. So, the first part, really, is you see Light standing on a hill. You know, it's God that really has, from the very beginning, been calling out light out of darkness.

We read the Book of John, and in John 1:4-5, it says this, “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

(John 1:5) The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend (overpower) it.”

And that's the wonderful message of our Light, because when Christ came, there was no Christ plus something. It just eradicated all other. That's what the tribulation does. It separates, it obliterates gray and obscurity and shadows. And you have to make a decision. So, when Christ comes on the scene, even the Pharisees, who people perceive to be, well, these are religious people. You look at the Pharisees next to Jesus, and you go, "That's darkness. That's Light." And that's why they hated Him so much. Because the choice was so clear. For the first time ever, the choice was so clear. So that religion just had to go away in the midst of it.

2 Corinthians 4:4 reads this way,

"... the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving..."

And as it goes on in verse 6,

(2 Corinthians 4:6) "For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Isn't that a great passage? You know, when you see Christ, you see Light. And in Him, as John will say in 1 John, is no darkness at all. There is no obscurity. There's no guessing. When God says, "I love you," it's not "sort of love you." It just beams "Love you." And it's the clarity of His love that we so fall in love with.

Ephesians 5:8 says this,

(Ephesians 5:8) "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light."

And then he goes on, I love verse 9 of Ephesians 5,

(Ephesians 5:9) "(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)."

Think about that. Where you have Light, you have genuineness and sincerity, and they really mean what they say. I think this is one of the things that James was craving in the Epistle of James. You know, look, don't just talk about being a Christian. Do it. Be a light in all goodness and righteousness. Be a light in truth. And God is looking for those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth, right? The clarity of such that we love so much.

It goes on to say in verse 10,

(Ephesians 5:10) “Trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

Matthew 5:14 reads this way,

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”

And that's how Chapter 14 starts off in Revelation. Where are these people? And who are they standing with? Well, watch the passage.

It says this,

(Revelation 14:1) “Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion...”

Now, Zion has the connotation in Scripture always of that which is of light beaming. So, we're on a hill. Or as Matthew would say, you don't want to put the light in a bushel, you don't want to hide it. You want to set it on a hill for all to see. And wow, is this light shining brightly. Because light will shine brightest in the darkest hour. And it's more defined than ever before. Everything becomes clear and you see this mass, 144,000, that are standing

with the Lamb. And they're declaring, "We're with Him!"  
And how are they declaring?

If you look at the passage, it says,

"... and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand..."

The word "standing," of course, makes reference to the fact that they're fixed, not moving. If you're ever going to run, that would be the time to do it. Because you're in the midst. I mean, you can't buy yourself without the mark of the beast, and they're going to kill you if you don't get it. Now, you go stand on a mount and say you're with the other guy. I mean, what an easy target you are. You're virtually saying, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of God. I believe it's the power. And I'm going to put all of my trust in Him alone." What a great picture that is. I mean, to me it is so moving. It's no wonder that Matthew 5:16 goes on to say, "Let your light so shine before men that they would see your good works and glorify God in heaven." I mean, talk about pointing to God. You have with Him 144,000, and Revelation has already clarified, 12,000 from every tribe, and God is declaring, "I have reserved those for Myself." I oftentimes think of Elijah in the Old

Testament. He goes, "I'm the only one," and He says, "No, we have 7,000 that I've reserved." And this is such a picture of God saying, "I have preserved a witness that will stand on the mount and men that are not ashamed to declare that I am their God."

If you look at the passage, it reads,

"... one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads."

Now, there are a couple of things that I think are very interesting. One is, of course, when you look at the mark of the beast, it's a mark of the beast. It's an imprint, and he's forcing you to take it. When you look at this passage, this is in what is called the active present, which makes reference to the fact that these people had willingly and wittingly made the decision to make God their God. And so, they put His name on their foreheads. That's a big difference, isn't it? It's that willing spirit that is proclaiming. But that's the difference between light and darkness. Darkness will force you to acquiesce to what they're doing. They're going to oppress you. But Jesus will

come along and He'll say, "Whosoever will may come. If you'll call upon the name of the Lord, you shall be saved. I'm knocking. If you'll open the door, I'll come in. But I'm not going to barge in. I'm not going to oppress you. I'm giving you a choice." And you go, "Wow, that's so much different than the world that tries to get you to fall in line with everything that they're doing and think the way that they're thinking. God is so much better." And those of us who can see the difference, willingly take that name and we say, "I'm not ashamed." Paul will say to Timothy, "Don't be ashamed of our Christ and of the tribulation that comes with it. Don't." Write that name on your forehead.

It goes on and says,

(Revelation 14:2) "And I heard a voice..."

Now, what's interesting is that initially we would think that the voice was the people singing on the mount. But that's not it. It's a voice from heaven. And the voice from heaven is described as a thunderous voice. Read the passage with me.

"And I heard a voice from heaven..."

So, we're not on Mount Zion in this text.

“... like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.”

Actually, in the Greek, it's “harpists harping”. And it's probably where they get the picture of harps playing on the clouds, which is an erroneous picture of heaven, but people get that picture.

Why use the word “harps”? Why is that the instrument that is being used? Well, first of all, what is significant, Josephus actually makes an interesting point, a historian of the Jews, that the harps were always 12 strings, which is interesting because you have the 12 tribes of Israel. But more than that, the harps, like all string instruments, make reference to a plucking. And the purpose of the plucking is to display a vibration. So, if you've ever plucked a string, you can see the string vibrating. The picture of this is the intensity of the heart. God wants you not coming with a lackadaisical attitude, but when you praise Him, He wants you vibrating inside. He wants the intensity to be, “I love God with all my heart.” And He

wants you moving. It needs to be a moving experience. And so, the harp is the perfect picture that displays intense emotion. And of course, the call is the intense emotion of His people in which He is calling them to sing. Now, the sound that we hear is like thunder.

But if you understand the way that this reads, it says, “And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.”

So, what we hear is thunder, but it's music. You understand? Thunder, that's music. So, what we find continually as we go through, and ultimately as we come to Revelation 19, is that thunder was what? The voices of those saints in heaven. And what are they doing? They're proclaiming the praises of God. Why are they thunderous at this moment? Because all of Heaven is rejoicing over those that are taking their stand with the Lamb. That's something to rejoice about. You know, when God sees you take a stand, you think heaven is still? No, heaven is thundering. What's that thunder I hear? That's the saints.

Can you imagine a mass of saints from all time, thundering all together with great song? What a beautiful sound, and yet a powerful sound that must be. And you begin to hear the moving of the praises.

“... I heard was like the sound of harpists playing...”

“I heard the music of the thunder,” would be another way of putting it.

(Revelation 14: 3) “And they sang a new song...”

Now, it's not the first time that we saw this phrase. In fact, every time we see that particular phrase, it uses the word “*kainos*”. “*Kainos*” is a word that describes a freshness. And if I were to describe it more focused, it would be a freshness that's literally unprecedented. You may have had birthdays before, but somebody gives you a really good birthday, and you'll say something like, “I've never had a birthday like this.” Now, you've had birthdays before, and you celebrate it, but not like this. And the picture is a singing that is unprecedented. It's like nobody's ever seen. They've never heard the intensity of this. And they begin to sing. That is to say, the 144,000. The heavens are moving, the thunders, and they're

rejoicing. You've stood with the Lamb. You've made your identification with Him. We're excited. And then they start singing, "We are so thankful for God." And the song, well, you say to yourself, "I've never seen anybody sing like that before."

Now, if you back up into Revelation 5, You see, of course, the Lamb of God taking the title deed to Himself, and heavens begin to roar, and the elders begin to cry, and it says, if you look in verse 9,

(Revelation 5:9) "And they sang a new song..."

Same word, "unprecedented".

What is the song they're singing?

"... "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

(Revelation 5:10) You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

And people and angels in heaven go, "I've never heard it put that way before." It's a new song. And the same thing is true within this passage; there is a new movement that's going on. And look, we're all redeemed, and we all share that in common. But each redemption is unique. And each testimony is like, "I never heard somebody saved that way before. I never heard somebody saved from that." And that's why when you're going through the seven churches of Asia Minor, each one has a redemption. Smyrna is given the crown of life, Thyatira the morning star, Ephesus the tree of life, Sardis is given confession before the Father, Laodicea is going to be able to reign with Him, and Philadelphia is going to be a pillar in the temple. Everyone is described in a different way because they are redeemed in a different way. The Jews are redeemed in a very different way than the Gentiles, but we're both redeemed. They had the Law. We did not. They are vessels of testimony, as Romans will say, that they might declare, "God is faithful to keep His promise, because He made promises to us." But we, as Gentiles, declare, "God was merciful to us because He didn't make

any promises to us, but He saved us anyway.” And so, we all have a fresh song to sing.

And it is that fresh song that we see within the passage, (Revelation 14:3) “And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders...”

The picture is, here they are on earth, they're taking their stand with their Lamb, and they're looking up to the Father in Heaven and to the glory that surrounds Him, and they're saying, “This is to You, this is for You,” and you see the powerful of this great song that is being sung.

The passage reads,

“...the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.”

What the text is saying is, this was a unique redemption as unto them. Purchased like no other peoples. As I could say, I was purchased like no other person. What's interesting is the way that it's put, “and no one could learn the song except them.” Now, the reason why that's

interesting is, and by the way, as you go into Chapter 15, you see in heaven a song of Moses, which is interesting, isn't it?

In fact, if you look in Revelation 15:3,

“And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God...””

As you read in the Old Testament, in particular, Deuteronomy 31, and it goes into Chapter 32, you understand that Moses actually wrote a song. Take a moment; we'll look at it together. Deuteronomy 31, if you'll turn there with me. Boy, he was a man of many talents, wasn't he? He could take care of sheep, he could write songs. Sounds a little bit like David too, didn't he? Deuteronomy 31. Moses is basically saying to the people, “We're going into the promised land, you're not going to do the right thing. Because of that, bad times are coming. And when you're in the midst of the worst of the worst, you're going to remember this song that I wrote, and you're going to start singing it.”

So, the passage reads, if you pick up with me in Deuteronomy 31,

(Deuteronomy 31:21) “Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for I know their intent...”

“I know they're not going to do the right thing.”

(Deuteronomy 31:22) “So Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the sons of Israel.”

Now, when you go back to Revelation 14:3, and it says, “and no one could learn the song except,” it uses “*manthanō*” as the Greek word within the text for “learn”. What that means is that he's referring to a learning done by practice. So, it's actually where we get the word “discipleship”. You're practicing doing the right thing so that you're rehearsing and practicing. The point is, in the text, that they're singing a song that couldn't be learned through practice. See, the melody that God puts in our heart and the thoughts that we have towards Him can't be learned. It comes because of His unique

redemption into our lives. And it's one of the reasons why our testimonies sound different. You go, “Well, that testimony sounds different than that.” I mean, it's the same redemption. You can hear the same redemption, but you go, “That is so different.” But you walk up to somebody that's just given their testimony, and if you were to say to somebody, “How long did it take you to rehearse that testimony?” They would look at you pretty strangely. And they would probably say something like this, “It couldn't be learned.” Well, in the Old Testament, the Law could only be taught. And all Moses could do was to teach his people. “I'm going to teach you a song. You're going to remember it because difficult times are going to come.”

In fact, in verse 29, if you read,

(Deuteronomy 31:29) “For I know that after my death you will act corruptly...”

This is not an encouraging word, by the way. This is how not to be encouraging “101.”

“For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil

will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands.”

(Deuteronomy 31:30) Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete: ...”

So, in Chapter 32, you begin to see the wonderful words of the song. And of course, it ascribes greatness to the Lord.

(Deuteronomy 32:3) “For I proclaim the name of the LORD;

Ascribe greatness to our God!”

Actually, one of the texts that's quoted in Revelation is seen in Chapter 15.

And then it goes on, and I think in particular verse 11 is interesting, because 11 is the song,

(Deuteronomy 32:11) “Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,  
That hovers over its young,

He spread His wings and caught them,

He carried them on His pinions.”

Do you know in Chapter 12 of Revelation, that's the exact description that is given of God taking care of His people? He sweeps them up like an eagle and takes them up into the mountains.

So, as you go through all of this song, and it's quite a long. I don't know if it's like 20 verses, but it's a pretty long song.

But then you come to Deuteronomy 32:36,

“For the LORD will vindicate His people,  
And will have compassion on His servants,  
When He sees that their strength is gone...”

Well, that's what has to happen before we completely depend on Him.

“... And there is none remaining, bond or free.”

(Deuteronomy 32:39) “See now that I, I am He,  
And there is no god besides Me;  
It is I who put to death and give life...”

I believe that, don't you? That's why I stand with Him.

Disease doesn't put me to death. Guns don't put me to

death. Man doesn't put me to death. God's the one that controls.

(Deuteronomy 32:43) “Rejoice, O nations, with His people;

For He will avenge the blood of His servants,

And will render vengeance on His adversaries,

And will atone for His land and His people.”

Now, I don't know exactly what they were singing, but I know in Chapter 15, the song of Moses is being sung in the heavens. But the declaration is, “I trust wholly in Him.” In fact, as you read through much of that song, “We were the ones that were wrong. He was the One that was right. He girded us. He strengthened us. He saved us.” And it is that wonderful, wonderful story that we say and tell.

As you go back to Revelation 14:4,

“These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.”

Now, the reason why he interjects celibacy is because we're in war. Let me put it another way. We're in the realm of the greatest extremities, where the devotion to God has to be so powerful that nothing else is in any way going to curtail that. The darker the hour, the more you're forced not only to make a decision, but to clearly and only put your devotion to God. You have to. There can't be a devotion to anything else or anyone else. Christ will say, "I tell you, you have to even hate family." The time is coming when that has to be so clear.

If you look with me in Deuteronomy, just an interesting picture when God is actually saying that the day is going to come when you're going to have to go to battle. You know, how do you prepare for battle? It's very interesting how you prepare for battle because if you go into battle half-heartedly, you're not only going to die, but you're also going to kill other people. If you're not totally focused on the battle; if you're thinking about other things.

So, if you look with me in Deuteronomy 20, it says,

(Deuteronomy 20:4) “for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”

Now, who's going to win the battle? God. But your head can't be someplace else. You can't be thinking, “What about at home? I think I left the oven on.” Yeah, you can't go to battle thinking about that.

So, it says,

(Deuteronomy 20:5) “The officers also shall speak to the people, saying, ‘Who is the man that has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would dedicate it.’”

In other words, “Go home.” “Why?” “You’re thinking about your house, aren't you?” “Yeah?” “Go home.”

(Deuteronomy 20:6) “Who is the man that has planted a vineyard and has not begun to use its fruit? Let him depart and return to his house...”

Go home.

(Deuteronomy 20:7) “And who is the man that is engaged to a woman and has not married her? ...”

Go home.

And here's one more,

(Deuteronomy 20:8) “Then the officers shall speak further to the people and say, ‘Who is the man that is afraid and fainthearted? ...”

Well, that was the question that was posed with Gideon. They have 35,000 men, which aren't too many men going against hundreds of thousands of others, but 35,000 men. And God says, “Ask them this one question, ‘Who's afraid?’” You know how many men raised their hand? Actually, 22,000 out of 32,000 raised their hands. So, you have 10,000 left. Most people left.

“Then the officers shall speak further to the people and say, ‘Who is the man that is afraid and fainthearted? Let him depart and return to his house, so that he might not make his brothers’ hearts melt like his heart.’”

Why does Scripture define them as celibate? Because their focus has to be solely on God. This is an intense

warfare. And there can't be a moment that they take their eyes off of Christ. There can't be a millisecond, because the darkness is so dark that anything and everything will be used against them to come away from God.

In many respects, Luke touches upon the same thing if you look in Luke 14. The Gospel of Luke begins to convey that a decision has to be made when the king invites you to a meal. Luke 14, if you look in verse 15, it has the same feel; it has the same sound as you come into this passage. We understand that there was a great reception, and many were invited, according to verses 12, 13, and 14.

Then it says in verse 15,

(Luke 14:15) “When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

(Luke 14:16) But He said to him, “A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;

(Luke 14:17) and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’

(Luke 14:18) But they all alike began to make excuses...”

Now, man would say that he has good reason; God would call them excuses. “You buy a house?” “Yes, I have good reason.” “That's an excuse but go home.” “You have a field?” “Yeah, I have to plow the field.” “It's not a good reason, it's an excuse, go home.”

The passage says,

“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.’

(Luke 14:19) Another one said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out...’”

Sort of like, you know, you bought the new car, you have to try it out before God comes and the Rapture and everything.

“... please consider me excused.’

(Luke 14:20) Another one said, ‘I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.’”

All were excuses. One was, “I have to survey my possessions.” “I have to try out my new contraption.” “I have to be with my wife.” They're all excuses.

If you look with me in 1 Corinthians 7; I don't want to be drifting too far ahead, but I just want to really nail this one. 1 Corinthians 7, when people say, “Well, Paul says that we shouldn't get married,” you don't understand the context of what he's saying. He's saying you shouldn't get married if there's a war going on.

So, it says,

(1 Corinthians 7:25) “Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.”

(1 Corinthians 7:26) “I think then that this is good in view of the present distress...”

That's defining the circumstance.

“... that it is good for a man to remain as he is.”

“I mean, don't get married if you're not married. And if you're married, don't leave her. Don't change anything. It's not the time for change.”

(1 Corinthians 7:27) “Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

(1 Corinthians 7:28) But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.”

Why? Because you're in a time of distress. All kinds of tribulation was coming up at this juncture. And Paul says, “You don't want to make any of these kinds of decisions at this point.” He then talks about the fact that the time has now been shortened. And the form of this world is passing away, verse 31.

And he says,

(1 Corinthians 7:32) “But I want you to be free from concern...”

“Because if you marry a young lady, you're going to be worried about her the whole time that the difficulties are coming. And you can't concentrate on what God has called you to do.” So, the same thing is true, as you see.

And of course, Paul reiterates this in 2 Timothy 2, where he says, “No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life. But he has to focus on his service.” So, what you see is this complete devotion, which God has inspired in their hearts. They're not celibate because they're made to. They're devoted to God, and they're devoted to a cause and a purpose, and to Him alone. And once again, the intensity of the moment is that which brings the clarity of the decision. So, the darker the hour gets, the clearer you have to be about where you stand and what you believe. And the more devoted you have to be to God.

It says this in verse 5,

(Revelation 14:5) “And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.”

Now, the point of that is this, that there's no deception in anything that they're saying. What are they saying? Well, they're giving all praise to God. Are they faking that? Not a bit. It's all wholehearted. They've written a name on their forehead. Is there any deception in that? No, they're not ashamed. In fact, they know they may die for doing it,

but they're not afraid. Everything is with complete sincerity and genuineness, and transparency. And there's not one lie in anything they do. There's this resolve to live righteously, to do the things that God has told them to do.

If you look at the passage, there are basically a few things that if you haven't already jotted them down, you need to. That as darkness begins to move in, what will preserve you? Because look, I know that there are people that say, "I kind of trust in God." But I've got news for you; you will not be preserved. There is no perseverance in that half-heartedness that will save you.

And the passage reads, if you go on a little bit further in Revelation 14:12,

(Revelation 14:12) "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus."

"Who keep." There has to be this wholeheartedness.

Of course, the other side of the coin, if you look in verse 9, and once again, the comparison of light and darkness,

(Revelation 14:9) “Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,

(Revelation 14:10) he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented...”

I mean, are you feeling this? You're either on one side of the fence or the other. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. I mean, it's all or nothing. There is no middle road here. You're either singing on the mount, or you're taking the mark of the beast. You decide. And the clarity of this is, well, you have to see the genuineness of the heart.

There are several things that take place if, in fact, you want to be steadfast in the midst of the darkness. That is, just to let you know, moving in. It is moving in. The first is very clear. You have to fix your eyes on Jesus. The best way that that's put really is in Hebrews 12:2. And of course, they're standing with the Lamb. They're fixing; standing; they're fixed on the Lamb.

Hebrews will say,

(Hebrews 12:2) “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith...”

Your focus has to be on Him. It can't be on anything else. If it is on something else, you're going to fall. You're going to falter. You're not going to make it.

That's why 1 Thessalonians 3:8 says,

“... stand firm in the Lord.”

You're not going to stand fast if you're not with the Lord.

And Paul will say in 2 Corinthians 1:24,

“... for in your faith you are standing firm.”

We put all of our trust in Him. In case you didn't know what faith means, it means putting all of your trust in Him. So, fixing your eyes on Christ has got to be the first thing that happens.

The second thing that happens is that you have to boldly pledge your allegiance to Him. And this is what they do by the writing on the foreheads. Why on the foreheads? Why not on the hand? Why not roll up the sleeve? Or maybe, somewhere where your shirt covers? Why on the

forehead? “I'm not ashamed.” And the bolder you are about your pledge and allegiance to Him, the more grace and protection are upon you.

The way that it's put in Hebrews 10:39,

“But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction...”

So, if you're shrinking back, where are you going? You're going away from the One that can protect you.

Acts 4:8-12, Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit, and he declares, “There is salvation in no one else.” You hear what he's saying? He's making it so clear.

Luke 12:8 says,

“And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God;

(Luke 12:9) but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.”

Paul will say to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:8, “Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.” Believe me, it's the greatest protection that you and I could ever have.

You want strength and protection from the Lord? Boldly pledge your allegiance to Him. It'll happen.

The third thing that we see is that they declare their gratitude joyfully as unto the Lord. That's basically what they're doing within the passage.

It says,

(Revelation 14:3) “And they sang a new song...”

And the word “song” is always related to praise to God in the New Testament, this particular word that he's using.

So, when you read in Ephesians 5, it says, “Singing to one another, in songs and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your heart as to the Lord”; it's making reference to singing to Him from your heart. And so, what are you singing? Well, the praises of God, “It's all You.

We're thankful for You.” The gratitude to Him. Praise of thanksgiving. That's why the word “praise” is used to really describe the song. And if you understand what's being done in verse 3, there's a joyfulness. It's a new song. So, it couldn't be, “Oh, we're happy God saved us.” Sonny could sing it better than that. But there's this new

joy and people are going, "I haven't heard people that excited about God ever before." If you, in fact, are declaring your thankfulness to God with that kind of joy, you're protected. You must be standing with the Lamb. It is the power of God. And if you look, there is a devotion within the text that is solely to Him. That's that whole idea of they are celibate as unto the Lord. You're devoted to what He wants, His righteousness. So, there's this purity, this fidelity that you have. What's interesting is James will talk about, "Don't you know that if you love the world, you're adulterers because you left the one that you love? You said you love God more than anything and yet you're embracing the things of the world." So, anything, anything of the flesh, anything of the world that you're embracing, makes you a traitor. And in times of clarity, you're going to have to make it clear, "I don't love anybody more than You. You're the One I love more than anything." And the more steadfast you'll be there, the more God will shine His light upon you, and you'll truly be a light in the world as well as protected by the wonderful power of God.

And then last but not least, the passage says that you and I need to be real. Stop lying. Be genuine about your faith. With sincerity, you and I should be... I mean, 2 Timothy 2:19 says, "The Lord knows those who are His." You go, "How does He know?" He judges the intent and the motives of the heart. He knows who's real and who's fake. And you start seeing this stuff when things get a little stirred up and tumultuous. You go, "There's doubt, there's doubt, there's doubt. Nope, that's a solid one right there. I see that solid." And you see that person standing unafraid, unashamed, and you go, "You must really believe." "Well, I said I did, didn't I?" I mean, they're even taken back by the fact, "Why would you even think otherwise?" Because everything they do is so transparent and so clear.

Listen, the only thing darkness does to believers is it accentuates our light. You know, you can see us more clearly than you've ever seen us before. We stand out to the world like a sore thumb. But to other believers, we go, "Wow, that's a refreshing thing." Can you imagine how refreshing it must be to people that are left on the earth

which we're going to read about that are not going to receive the mark of the beast, and they see this 144,000 and they're not moving? Can you imagine how encouraging that was? And the reason why it's written is to tell the church, "Don't move." Stand by the Lamb. Don't change your doctrine. Don't change what you believe in. Don't listen to the world. They're going to try to scare you. They're going to try to move you off. You stand still. Be a light. And it's a great encouragement.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Father, we come before You today, and it's our desire to follow You with all of our hearts. We see this wonderful picture of those that have made a commitment and have devoted themselves solely to You; that have their eyes fixed on You, the author and perfecter of their faith. There is no doubt that there is gratitude in their voice and a joy that, well, we've never heard before. Lord, that it would ever be true with this church. May people see things that they've never seen before, a confidence, a joy, a thankfulness of what God has done. To God be the

glory, great things He hath done. And let them hear our testimony that is so unique; they would have to say, "I've never heard that before. That's not something that could be learned. It's not something that could be taught. You must have a real relationship." May they walk away having a confrontation, if nothing else, with truth. And may light shine and dispel the darkness that is all around us.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm asking you to make that decision. Oh, you will make the decision. But if a day comes where tribulation is so powerful, it overwhelms you, you will not stand if you have not made one. Darkness moves in. It will force clarity.